

The Builder.

No. CXXVII.

SATURDAY, JULY 12, 1845.



ARRANGEMENTS are being made, under the direction of Mr. Decimus Burton, preparatory to raising the colossal equestrian statue of the Duke of Wellington, now nearly completed by Wylst, to its ill-chosen destination,—the top of the triumphal archway leading into St. James's Park. A strong inverted arch is about to be formed under the opening, and other precautions are to be taken to prevent unequal subsidence.

We fear it is too late to strive against the unwise determination to place the group on the structure in question; the press, as representatives of public opinion, were loud in their outcries against it at the time (1839) when a wooden model of the statue was set up, to the great alarm of wondering nursemaids and the crows; and, as their remarks were not then listened to, it is hardly likely, now that the arrangements are more forward, that the ruling powers will be induced to abandon their intention. Still we cannot avoid making one effort to that effect. The top of a triumphal arch, complete in itself, is not a proper place for a commemorative figure. One of two evils is certain to result: either the archway must be degraded into a mere pedestal, or the figure must lose its individuality and purpose, and become simply an adornment of the arch.

It was urged at the time we refer to, by those who wished to place the statue on the archway, that Mr. Burton, long before the Wellington statue was proposed, had suggested that a group of figures was essential to the completeness of his design; and it is very likely he did: but we will undertake to say he never desired a figure so large as entirely to destroy the importance of the structure, or, in fact, that it should be any thing more than an ornamental accessory. If they had made the structure the "Wellington Archway," and placed a quadriga, or figures, of a moderate size upon it, it would have been complete in itself and unobjectionable, excepting on the ground of situation; but by placing one monument on another, as they are about to do, degrading one without advantaging the other, they are, to speak in the mildest way, depriving the metropolis of one additional adornment, and committing a grievous mistake.

We referred to the situation of the archway. When it was first proposed to place the figure there, the writer of the present notice urged that it was objectionable as regarded the duke's own feelings. Behind Apsley House stands "Achilles," to the occasional embarrassment of him whom it honours; and now that his grace may have on means of escape by turning to the Piccadilly side of it, this second memorial is to be placed there to starm him and his guests out of countenance.

Observe, too, the position in which the group must stand; crossways, presenting the flank of the horse to all who pass beneath it,—as unprecedented as its effect will be unpleasant. Surely we have not so many public monuments in London that we can afford to sacrifice two at once? Let us leave the archway as it is, making it perfect, if you please, with accessory figures, and form a proper pedestal for

the colossal statue in some of the many fine sites in London which require adornment.

Look at it in which way you will, the present intention is full of objections, and, if carried out, will prove a great reproach.

HONOUR TO ARCHITECTURAL LITERATURE.

THE Castle Hotel, Richmond, was on Monday last the scene of the most gratifying meeting we have had to record, namely, a public dinner given to Mr. John Britton, the indefatigable antiquary and topographer. The numerous fine works which that gentleman has produced, illustrating the architectural triumphs of England, have led to a well-merited expression of gratitude and admiration, not only from professors and students of architecture and engineering, but from literary, artists, and others.

To present Mr. Britton with a permanent testimonial of the high estimation in which his labours are held, a subscription has recently been opened, which already amounts to above 300*l*. The meeting on Monday was a supplementary feature of the project.

Owing to the unavoidable absence of Mr. Wyse, M.P., in consequence of the debate in the House of Commons on the Irish Colleges Bill, the chair was taken by the treasurer, N. Gould, Esq., who conducted the business of the evening very efficiently. Near to him were seated Mr. Britton, the Dean of Hereford, the Rev. Dr. Ingram (President of the Trinity College, Oxford), Professor Hoakings, W. Tate, V.P. of the Architects' Institute, Capt. Smith, Lieut. Stratford, Mr. J. D. Harding, Dr. Connolly, Dr. R. Dickson, Mr. D. Roberts, R.A., J. B. Nichols, F.S.A., Mr. Lewis Pocock, F.S.A., Mr. Gaskoin, Mr. Wansley, F.S.A., and Mr. Rainy. Mr. Wm. Tooke, F.R.S., and Mr. Wm. Jordan, the veteran editor of the *Literary Gazette*, acted as vice-presidents, and were supported by the Rev. Dr. Iters, the Rev. E. Tagart, Mr. Brayley, Mr. Maugham, Mr. S. C. Hall, F.S.A., Mr. B. H. Smart, Mr. Ingram, Mr. Corner, F.S.A., Mr. J. Timbs, and Mr. C. F. Whiting. There were also present, Mr. Fowler, Mr. Booth, Mr. Mair, Mr. Douthorne, Mr. Chapman, Mr. Herbert, Mr. W. Cubitt, Mr. Grissell, Mr. Dunnage, Mr. E. Hall, Mr. Crow, Mr. Sealy, and many others.

After the usual loyal toasts had been given, the CHAIRMAN, in proposing the health of Mr. Britton, expressed his regret that Mr. Wyse was prevented attending, as he would have been much better qualified to do justice to the subject. He, however, could speak of Mr. Britton from long acquaintance, having associated with him at a Board of Commissioners, to which for upwards of thirty years that gentleman had been attached in the discharge of onerous duties, with their entire satisfaction and with honour to himself. Mr. Britton was not ashamed to have it known that he was of humble origin, and that he had not had the advantages of education in his youth; but he had been both the builder and the architect of his own fortunes, and by unwearied industry and perseverance he had succeeded, in spite of every disadvantage, in producing those works which had placed him in his present position. (*Great cheering.*) By a paper which he then held in his hand, he found that the number of those volumes was 66; besides numerous, almost innumerable, essays; that they comprised no less than 17,122 pages; and such of them as had ever attempted to write even twenty pages would be able to appreciate the labour. The engravings in Mr. Britton's works were 1,866, and their beauty and accuracy were well known; and to come to a matter which he, as a commercial man, might be supposed to know more about, the money expended in these productions amounted to the enormous sum of 50,328*l*. (*Renewed cheering.*) And all of these, it should be remembered, were essentially useful and instructive. That day was Mr. Britton's birthday; on that day he entered upon his seventy-fifth year; and his whole life had been actively and industriously spent. He rejoiced to see amongst them on that occasion a gentleman whose name, in conjunction with Mr. Britton's, was well-known. He alluded to Mr. Brayley. (*Cheers.*) It was unnecessary for him to enlarge further on these topics. Whatever the testimonial to

be hereafter given to Mr. Britton might be, he was sure the committee would give it with the same sincerity as he then proposed his health and happiness. He only regretted that he had no son to whom his virtues might descend, and who in pointing to his many works, and to the record of the measures then in progress, might say with pride, "that was my father."

The toast was drunk with the greatest enthusiasm; the cheering lasted for many minutes.

MR. BRITTON, with much feeling, addressed the meeting as his "kind friends;" and said it had been his intention to have given them some lengthened account of his struggles and his exertions; but he found old age creep upon him, and having been suffering for a week past from indisposition, he felt that such an effort would be imprudent. He had ever had the advantages of a collegiate or academical education; indeed, when he was about to commence his publications he was absolutely ignorant either of a grammar or a dictionary; but he was thereby induced to procure and study both books. He alluded to his confinement, in his youth, to the cellar of a wine-merchant, for six years, where he contrived by great industry to do as much work in six hours as his fellow-apprentice did in ten, enabling him to devote four hours so gained to mental improvement. Throughout his life his works had been received with much kind commendation; unkind remarks (which no man could escape), although he felt them at the time, only stimulated him to further exertions. He had consequently been able to publish the many works referred to by the chairman, and which he might say without arrogance were of utility and importance. Only one or two of them could be considered as of an ephemeral nature; yet although he had always made every effort to ensure the strictest accuracy, none of them had completely satisfied his own judgment. With reference to the testimonial proposed to be offered in kind approval of his works and his exertions, he had at once refused to accept a piece of plate, or any compliment of a pecuniary kind. He had confided the decision on that point to a committee, who he was convinced would adopt some plan which while it would be gratifying to himself would combine some benefit to art and literature. He thanked them for the cordiality with which they had received the toast, and trusted that the younger of them would be led by these proceedings to acts of emulation, and that they would all feel, like him, delighted, honoured, and gratified in the last hours of life. (*Great applause.*)

MR. W. TOOK proposed the "Society of Antiquaries" in a short but able speech, which was replied to by DR. INGRAM.

THE DEAN OF HEREFORD, in proposing the health of the chairman, commented at considerable length on the works of Mr. Britton.

THE REV. DR. INGRAM then gave the health of the honorary secretaries, Mr. Godwin and Mr. P. Cunningham; and took occasion to offer his testimony to the worth of Mr. Britton, and the value of his labours.

MR. GODWIN said, before he thanked them for the kind manner in which they had acknowledged the small services of his colleague and himself, he would, in pursuance of his duty as secretary, read a letter from Mr. Wyse, to shew that his absence had not proceeded from want of desire to be present. The letter was as follows:—

House of Commons, July 4th, 1845.

MY DEAR SIR.—I have just learned from Sir James Graham, in answer to my question, in the House this evening, that it is the intention of the Government to take the *College Bill* (Ireland), the first of the orders of the day, on Monday. The bill being still in committee, demands the close and uninterrupted attendance of every Irish member, and I especially, from the long solicitude I have felt on the subject, feel myself more particularly bound to watch over its progress. This will compel me most reluctantly to sacrifice the honour and gratification I had anticipated in presiding over the dinner intended to be given to my friend, Mr. Britton. I cannot tell you or him how much I feel this disappointment; I had hoped it would have afforded the opportunity I have so long desired, of expressing my own sense of the many obligations which our